

DOE TEC Routing Topic Group Conference Call
Thursday, August 23, 2007 3:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. EST

Conference Call Minutes

Chair: Alex Thrower (RW)

Participants: Kevin Blackwell (DOT/FRA), Pat Brady (BNSF), Barbara Byron (CA Energy Commission), Kurt Colborn (MHF Logistics), Fred Dilger (Black Mountain Research for State of Nevada), Pat Edwards (CSG/NE), Scott Field (WIEB), Aubrey Godwin (ARRA), Lisa Janairo (CSG-MW), Vernon Jensen (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska), Paul Johnson (ORNL), Marsha Keister (INL), Mel Massaro (DOT/FRA), Christina Nelson (NCSL), Doug Osborn (SNL), Scott Palmer (BLET), Cort Richardson (CSG-NE), Tim Runyon (CSG/MW), Larry Stern (CVSA), Joe Strolin (Nevada), Kevin Tafoya (Santa Clara Pueblo), Sarah Wochos (CSG/MW)
Contractor Support: Ralph Best (BSC), Michele Enders (SAIC), Lee Finewood (BAH), John Smegal (Legin)

Summary:

The conference call began at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Thursday, August 23, 2007. The purpose of this call was to follow up on the discussions at the TEC Kansas City meeting. Specifically, this call was intended to address the Task Plan, Routing Principles document, Suite of Routes Definition and e-mail distribution issues.

E-Mail Distribution Issues:

Alex stated that since the TEC meeting there have been multiple email response comments by the members regarding the suite of routes definition. Since the e-mail distribution list is large, the Outlook program truncated the list and many of the comments were not received by the entire membership. A new solution for distributing comments is being considered. Some ideas for comment distribution could be a blog, listserv, or postings.

DOE TEC Kansas City Meeting Follow-Up/Next Steps for Topic Group:

Alex stated he reviewed all the transcripts from previous meetings and conference calls, work plans, DOE commitments to the topic group, commitments made by Gary Lanthrum (DOE/RW) to Ward Sproat (DOE/RW) and commitments Ward has made related to routing. Ward and Gary have committed to work with stakeholders to identify a suite of routes that would be sufficient for DOE to conduct planning and begin to help allocate Section 180(c) funds. The routing topic group was intended to be the cornerstone of that process. Unfortunately, nearly nine months into the topic group process, there are sharply contrasting views about the groups' purpose and objectives. Consensus definitions of basic terms such as "suite" and "principle" remain elusive. Alex suggested these continuing disagreements might be symptomatic of a larger, more basic problem with the topic group approach.

Alex asked for feedback from the topic group members as to their views on the topic group process and approach. He also suggested that, instead of providing extensive comments and/or complete rewrites of the draft work plan and principles document

(which themselves are further evidence of a lack of consensus), the group have a “cooling off” period until the fundamental issues surrounding the topic group can be addressed.

Scott Field commented there have been generalized feelings of frustration. The topic group has not been focusing on the bigger picture; Fred Dilger agreed and added that ultimately, it is DOE’s responsibility to determine a suite of routes. Fred suggested Alex review WIEB’s recommendation for a process in developing routes. The Western States believe this is still a valid process and would move the topic group forward towards DOE’s goal of a suite of routes.

Alex commented that DOE thought the topic group approach, in coordination with the analysis being done by several of the regional groups, was the best way to achieve the goal of identifying a suite of routes. However, if the topic group approach proves not to be productive, other alternatives could be used; there may be any number of reasonable and defensible methods for identifying routes. Lisa Janairo commented that the CSG/MW tried to ensure that the work done on their route identification project folded into DOE’s ultimate map of national routes. Lisa also commented that she was unsure if Alex was suggesting that the topic group be dissolved; he responded he was not suggesting dissolution; rather, he was trying to identify and correct the obvious problems the group has, and was asking for suggestions on ways the routing identification challenge could be addressed. One alternative would be for the topic group to take what the CSG/MW has done for route identification and extrapolate that work to other parts of the country, specifically the west and south who have not provided DOE with any routes. Joe Strolin commented that information gathering can only go so far and now DOE needs to put together what they have learned from the stakeholders and get reactions on the results. Aubrey Godwin asked if there is a commitment by DOE to specify to railroads the routes for shipments or is DOE going to let the railroads decide the routes and DOE will accept these routes. Alex responded that DOE is not prepared to say they will specify routes at this time.

One member asked what is the purpose of the topic group if DOE is not going to specify routes. Aubrey asked Alex how DOE is going to allocate 180(c) funds if routes are not specified. Alex responded that DOE does not need to know every route from every location in order to distribute funds equitably. Aubrey reiterated that he is not asking about every route but in general, at some point in time, will DOE specify routes for a shipment. Alex responded that shortly before a shipping campaign for a specific reactor commences, DOE will have a route or routes. Aubrey asked if DOE or the railroads will decide on alternative routes if a situation such as a flood would make the specified route unavailable. Alex responded that DOE may not need to be involved in those decisions as a shipper. DOE would lean towards having the railroads make those decisions about alternate routes since they are operating the rail lines and generating revenue from open and safely operating those lines. Kevin Blackwell stated that in a non-normal situation railroads have to make quick decisions on how they are going to route all their traffic not just the affected track to keep a bottleneck of traffic from happening. Tim Runyon commented that leaving all the decisions to the railroads might not be in the best interest of the shipper if the decisions are based on revenue. Kevin responded that the railroads’ decisions are not solely based on revenue but on keeping the rail cars and shipments moving.

Fred Dilger suggested the topic group provide alternative processes for identifying a suite of routes. Alex supported the concept of alternative analyses. He proposed that the topic group think about how to restructure what it is doing to answer the ultimate question:

- How do you (topic group) think we ought to go about coming up with the preliminary suite of routes that we (DOE) can use for planning purposes and 180(c)?

Topic group members should send their comments to Alex. This will be a topic for discussion on the next conference call. Lisa commented that the topic group needs to go back to Aubrey's original question of how is DOE going to ensure that the railroads use the routes selected by DOE. Various DOE fact sheets imply that DOE will have preferred routes they want to be used.

Alex responded that DOE is not prepared to answer Aubrey's original question so as not to over promise. There is still a lot of discussion and negotiation that needs to take place with the railroads. Alex is hoping this routing analysis will start with a preliminary look at routes that will be refined. Tim Runyon asked if the proposed legislation for shipping HRCQ quantities of RAM and TIH/PIH materials define how the railroads choose routes. Kevin Blackwell responded that he will submit his suggestions to Alex that the topic group may want to wait on selecting routes since the rules are coming out by the end of the fiscal year. Alex stated that the HR 1 Bill that passed had several rail security and routing-related issues in it.

Lee Finewood asked if the HR 1 Bill would supersede the DOT and TSA rulemakings. Kevin responded that this was correct since DOT pulled their draft final rule back to make sure that what was in the HR 1 Bill is also included in the rulemaking. Tim commented that the CSG/MW based their route identification study on the same model for highway so there may not be many differences in routes after the rules are finalized. Fred commented that although the legislation will have an impact on the topic group activities, it may not be a good enough reason not to start the process for identifying routes.

Alex summarized the discussion by reiterating that the topic group members can submit their suggestions and ideas for alternative approaches for identifying a suite of routes.

Task Plan:

Lisa Janairo asked if the Task Plan is being scrapped or is the topic group jumping ahead to developing an approach and methodology. Alex responded that the Task Plan is not being scrapped but would like to discuss the Task Plan. Alex stated he would like to wait to discuss the routing principles and the suite of routes definition.

Alex reviewed the changes to the task plan from the TEC Kansas City meeting. Item #4, Identifying Routing Criteria, has been deleted. For Item #2, Developing Routing Principles, the last sentence was modified to read "...development of the approach for identifying routes." There are some timeline issues for Item #5, Identify Suites of Highway, Rail and Barge Routes. The National Transportation Plan will be issued as a

preliminary draft sometime in the future and the dates in the plan are unknown at this time. Kevin asked if a revised Task Plan was sent to the topic group since the July TEC meeting. Alex responded that it has not been sent to the topic group. Alex asked what the purpose of Item #6, Review Analytical Tools and Data for Routing Analysis, was in the Task Plan. Ralph Best responded that this activity was to validate the tools used for routing.

Alex stated that the due dates for any of the Task Plan activities could be modified if more time is needed; we have time to get the analyses right.

Routing Principles and Suite of Routes Definition:

Alex asked the topic group if the Routing Principles document and the Suite of Routes Definition need any further discussion at this time. Joe Strolin responded that this is a moot issue until the topic group decides what the approach should be for route identification. In addition, Joe asked what does DOE want, what decisions is DOE willing and able to make, and what does the topic group hope to arrive at out of this whole process. Alex will provide a clear concise statement of what DOE wants to get from this process with the topic group. The topic group agreed this statement would definitely help the topic group in their approach recommendations.

Alex further clarified what statements he will provide the topic group:

- The first statement will address what DOE wants from the routing discussions with the SRGs, Nevada, railroads, etc.
- The second statement will address what DOE wants from the discussions with the TEC Routing Topic Group.

Kurt Colburn stated that if DOE is not prepared to commit to a suite of routes then maybe what is needed is a set of recommendations or parameters of what route features are acceptable. This is redefining routing guidelines or principles and not a suite of routes. Alex responded that DOE does not want to force a development of a map of routes if that is not what the topic group wants at this time. Alex stated he will confer with Gary Lanthrum and get a status on the routing project. Priorities may have changed for the next year to eighteen months. Lisa stated the purpose as it is written in the Task Plan. She further commented that it is important that DOE not dictate too much what the topic group does. This should be a forum for airing and compiling information on stakeholder perspectives. Alex agreed with Lisa's comment.

In concluding remarks, one member commented on one of the Routing Principles, the time in transit as an operational variable. It is going to require data to verify and its own definition. The topic group needs to think about how to implement this variable either by monthly average or annual average of time. In addition, other factors that may affect time in transit are new technologies. Alex responded that time in transit is one characteristic that the topic group needs to consider. It will be difficult to predict what the transportation system will be in the next few years.

Action Items:

1. Topic group members are to submit their ideas on alternative approaches for identifying a suite of routes.
2. Alex will provide a clear concise statement that will encompass two distinct parts:
 - what DOE wants from the routing discussions with the SRGs, Nevada, railroads, etc.
 - what DOE wants from the discussions with the TEC Routing Topic Group.